

Rights at his department, as well as a new office focused on environmental justice, including how pollution and public health hazards disproportionately hurt communities of color.

Overall, his record tells a story that is clear, compelling, and persuasive. He has fought against pharmaceutical companies, opioid manufacturers, tobacco companies and polluters and for more affordable, quality healthcare for every patient.

I have no doubt as Secretary that he will put special interests on notice and put patients and public health first and put science, data, and experts back in the driver's seat. And he would also bring an important perspective to this role as a first-generation college student and the first Latino Secretary of Health and Human Services.

He is exactly the kind of leader we need to make sure we make good on the promise of the historic investments we made in the American Rescue Plan to end this pandemic—investments to rapidly scale up testing and tracing and sequencing so we can identify new strains of COVID and slow the spread; investments to quickly and equitably get vaccines into arms, an effort that requires not just making vaccines available but breaking down barriers to access, promoting vaccine confidence, fighting misinformation, and engaging community partners; investments to build our public health infrastructure and recruit and train 100,000 public healthcare workers.

He will also be a valuable partner to Congress as we work to address challenges that predate this pandemic but have been made all the more urgent, like rooting out systemic racism and addressing inequities in our healthcare system, which have made this pandemic so much more damaging and deadly for communities of color; like addressing the mental healthcare crisis, which the trauma of this pandemic has made so much worse; like fighting the opioid epidemic, a crisis which was deadlier than ever this past year; and like expanding access to quality affordable childcare, which has become more difficult for families to get during this pandemic.

When this pandemic is over, we will need a strong leader at the Department to deal with the aftermath and with so many other outstanding issues: bringing down prescription drugs prices; making sure healthcare in this country is truly a right, not a privilege; undoing 4 years of attacks on reproductive rights and ensuring every woman can get reproductive healthcare, regardless of their race or income or ZIP Code or disability; lowering our unconscionably high maternal mortality rate; reversing the alarming trend of rising youth tobacco use; and ensuring the Office of Refugee Resettlement is upholding its welfare mission by prioritizing the well-being of every child in its care, ensuring they are treated with decency and humanity and kindness; and working to place

children with suitable sponsors quickly and safely.

We have our work cut out for us, but in Attorney General Becerra, we have a Secretary of Health who is up to the job. He has the support not only of Democrats but of Republicans, as the Republican attorneys general of both Louisiana and Tennessee have spoken highly of their experiences working with him.

I urge every Senator who wants the Biden-Harris administration to succeed at ending this pandemic quickly, keeping our families safe, and ensuring everyone can get quality affordable healthcare to join me in voting to confirm him.

Thank you.

I yield the floor.

VOTE ON TAI NOMINATION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Tai nomination?

Mrs. MURRAY. I ask for the yeas and nays.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Is there a sufficient second?

There appears to be a sufficient second.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

(Mr. KELLY assumed the Chair.)

(Ms. CORTEZ MASTO assumed the Chair.)

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) and the Senator from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) are necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HICKENLOOPER). Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The result was announced—yeas 98, nays 0, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 123 Ex.]

YEAS—98

Baldwin	Grassley	Peters
Barrasso	Hagerty	Portman
Bennet	Hassan	Reed
Blackburn	Hawley	Risch
Blumenthal	Heinrich	Romney
Blunt	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Booker	Hoeven	Rounds
Boozman	Hyde-Smith	Rubio
Braun	Inhofe	Sasse
Brown	Johnson	Schatz
Burr	Kaine	Schumer
Cantwell	Kelly	Scott (FL)
Capito	Kennedy	Scott (SC)
Cardin	King	Shaheen
Carper	Klobuchar	Shelby
Casey	Lankford	Sinema
Cassidy	Leahy	Smith
Collins	Lee	Stabenow
Coons	Lujan	Sullivan
Cornyn	Lummis	Tester
Cortez Masto	Manchin	Thune
Cotton	Markey	Tillis
Cramer	Marshall	Toomey
Crapo	McConnell	Tuberville
Cruz	Menendez	Van Hollen
Daines	Merkley	Warner
Duckworth	Moran	Warnock
Durbin	Murkowski	Warren
Ernst	Murphy	Whitehouse
Feinstein	Murray	Wicker
Fischer	Ossoff	Wyden
Gillibrand	Padilla	Young
Graham	Paul	

NOT VOTING—2

Hirono Sanders

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Oregon.

Mr. WYDEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 37, Xavier Becerra, of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services.

Charles E. Schumer, Chris Van Hollen, Michael F. Bennet, Jack Reed, Tammy Duckworth, Sheldon Whitehouse, Jeff Merkley, Christopher A. Coons, Richard Blumenthal, Patrick J. Leahy, Amy Klobuchar, Tina Smith, Brian Schatz, Ron Wyden, Robert Menendez, Richard J. Durbin, Martin Heinrich, Maria Cantwell.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Xavier Becerra, of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. I announce that the Senator from Hawaii (Ms. HIRONO) is necessarily absent.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Are there any other Senators in the Chamber desiring to vote?

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 50, nays 49, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 124 Ex.]

YEAS—50

Baldwin	Heinrich	Reed
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Blumenthal	Kaine	Sanders
Booker	Kelly	Schatz
Brown	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Leahy	Sinema
Carper	Lujan	Smith
Casey	Manchin	Stabenow
Collins	Markey	Tester
Coons	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warner
Duckworth	Murphy	Warnock
Durbin	Murray	Warren
Feinstein	Ossoff	Whitehouse
Gillibrand	Padilla	Wyden
Hassan	Peters	

NAYS—49

Barrasso	Cotton	Hagerty
Blackburn	Cramer	Hawley
Blunt	Crapo	Hoeven
Boozman	Cruz	Hyde-Smith
Braun	Daines	Inhofe
Burr	Ernst	Johnson
Capito	Fischer	Kennedy
Cassidy	Graham	Lankford
Cornyn	Grassley	Lee

Lummis	Romney	Thune
Marshall	Rounds	Tillis
McConnell	Rubio	Toomey
Moran	Sasse	Tuberville
Murkowski	Scott (FL)	Wicker
Paul	Scott (SC)	Young
Portman	Shelby	
Risch	Sullivan	

NOT VOTING—1

Hirono

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The yeas are 50, the nays 49.

The motion is agreed to.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Xavier Becerra, of California, to be Secretary of Health and Human Services.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Georgia.

MAIDEN SPEECH

Mr. WARNOCK. Mr. President, before I begin my formal remarks, I want to pause to condemn the hatred and violence that took eight precious lives last night in Metropolitan Atlanta.

I agree with Georgians, with Americans, with people of love all across the world. This unspeakable violence visited largely upon the Asian community is one that causes all of us to recommit ourselves to the way of peace, an active peace that prevents these kinds of tragedies from happening in the first place.

We pray for these families.

Mr. President, I rise here today, as a proud American and as one of the newest Members of the Senate, in awe of the journey that has brought me to these hallowed Halls and with an abiding sense of reverence and gratitude for the faith and sacrifices of ancestors who paved the way.

I am a proud son of the great State of Georgia, born and raised in Savannah, a coastal city known for its cobblestone streets and verdant town squares. Towering oak trees, centuries old and covered in gray Spanish moss, stretched from one side of the street to the other, bend and beckon the lover of history and horticulture to this city by the sea.

I was educated at Morehouse College, and I still serve in the pulpit of the Ebenezer Baptist Church, both in Atlanta, the cradle of the civil rights movement. And so like those oak trees in Savannah, my roots go down deep, and they stretch wide in the soil of Waycross, GA, and Burke County, and Screven County. In a word, I am Georgia, a living example and embodiment of its history and its hope, of its pain and promise, the brutality and possibility.

At the time of my birth, Georgia's two Senators were Richard B. Russell and Herman E. Talmadge, both arch segregationists and unabashed adversaries of the civil rights movement.

After the Supreme Court's landmark *Brown v. Board* ruling outlawing school segregation, Talmadge warned

that "blood will run in the streets of Atlanta."

Senator Talmadge's father, Eugene Talmadge, former Governor of our State, had famously declared: "The South loves the Negro in his place, but his place is at the back door."

When once asked how he and his supporters might keep Black people away from the polls, he picked up a scrap of paper and wrote a single word on it: "Pistols."

Yet there is something in the American covenant, in its charter documents and its Jeffersonian ideals, that bends toward freedom. And led by a preacher and a patriot named King, Americans of all races stood up. History vindicated the movement that sought to bring us closer to our ideals, to lengthen and strengthen the cords of our democracy, and I now hold the seat—the Senate seat—where Herman E. Talmadge sat.

That is why I love America. I love America because we always have a path to make it better, to build a more perfect Union. It is the place where a kid like me, who grew up in public housing, the first college graduate in my family, can now stand as a United States Senator.

I had an older father. He was born in 1917. Serving in the Army during World War II, he was once asked to give up his seat to a young teenager while wearing his soldier's uniform, as they said, "making the world safe for democracy." But he was never bitter. By the time I came along, he had already seen the arc of change in our country. He maintained his faith in God and in his family and in the American promise, and he passed that faith on to his children.

My mother grew up in Waycross, GA. Do you know where that is? It is way 'cross Georgia. Like a lot of Black teenagers in the 1950s, she spent her summers picking somebody else's tobacco and somebody else's cotton. But because this is America, the 82-year-old hands that used to pick somebody else's cotton went to the polls in January and picked her youngest son to be a United States Senator. Ours is a land where possibility is born of democracy: a vote, a voice, a chance to help determine the direction of the country and one's own destiny within it—possibility born of democracy.

That is why this past November and January, my mom and other citizens of Georgia grabbed hold of that possibility and turned out in record numbers, 5 million in November, 4.5 million in January—far more than ever in our State's history. Turnout for a typical runoff doubled, and the people of Georgia sent their first African-American Senator and first Jewish Senator, my brother JON OSSOFF, to these hallowed Halls.

But then, what happened? Some politicians did not approve of the choice made by the majority of voters in a hard-fought election in which each side got the chance to make its case to the

voters. And rather than adjusting their agenda, rather than changing their message, they are busy trying to change the rules. We are witnessing right now a massive and unabashed assault on voting rights, unlike anything we have ever seen since the Jim Crow era. This is Jim Crow with new clothes.

Since the January election, some 250 voter suppression bills have been introduced by State legislatures all across the country, from Georgia to Arizona, from New Hampshire to Florida, using the big lie of voter fraud as a pretext for voter suppression—the same big lie that led to a violent insurrection on this very Capitol the day after my election. Within 24 hours, we elected Georgia's first African-American and Jewish Senators, and hours later the Capitol was assaulted. You see in just a few precious hours the tension very much alive in the soul of America. The question before all of us at every moment is, What will we do to push us in the right direction?

So politicians, driven by that big lie, aim to severely limit and in some cases eliminate automatic and same-day voter registration, mail-in and absentee voting, and early voting and weekend voting. They want to make it easier to purge voters from the voting roll altogether. As a voting rights activist, I have seen up close just how draconian these measures can be. I hail from a State that purged 200,000 voters from the rolls one Saturday night in the middle of the night. We know what is happening here. Some people don't want some people to vote.

I was honored on a few occasions to stand with our hero and my parishioner, John Lewis. I was his pastor, but I am clear: He was my mentor. On more than one occasion, we boarded buses together after Sunday church services as part of our Souls to the Polls program, encouraging the Ebenezer Church family and other communities of faith to participate in the democratic process. Now, just a few months after Congressman Lewis's death, there are those in the Georgia legislature—some who even dared to praise his name—that are now trying to get rid of Sunday Souls to the Polls, making it a crime for people who pray together to get on a bus together in order to vote together. I think that is wrong. As a matter of fact, I think that a vote is a kind of prayer for the kind of world we desire for ourselves and for our children, and our prayers are stronger when we pray together.

To be sure, we have seen these kinds of voter suppression tactics before. They are part of a long and shameful history in Georgia and throughout our Nation. But refusing to be denied, Georgia citizens and citizens across our country braved the heat and the cold and the rain, some standing in line for 5 hours, 6 hours, 10 hours just to exercise their constitutional right to vote—young people, old people, sick people, working people already underpaid and forced to lose wages to pay a kind of